Meditation Handbook

A student helping student project

Meditation is inner astronomy. You discover the stars, the moon, and the sun are all inside you.

What is Meditation?

Most dictionaries define the Western (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) meaning of the word 'meditation,' but usually do not describe the Eastern (Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist) concept of meditation. The most appropriate dictionary definition I could find reads as follows: "If you meditate, you give your attention to one thing, and do not think about anything else, usually as a religious activity or as way of calming or relaxing your mind." This definition very subtly implies that meditation means thinking about something, be it religious or mystical in nature, and that a constant thought process goes on while one meditates. The purest Eastern definition of the word 'meditation' means not thinking at all, but rather focusing the consciousness on the cosmic whole, "the all and the everything" as George Gurdjieff called it, without thought, judgment, or distraction.

We define the word 'meditation' here as the <u>art</u> of consciousness becoming aware of itself on the grand and cosmic scale. Meditation cannot honestly be called a science because any real science requires objective testing, which is not currently possible for the practice of meditation. The <u>real art</u> of meditation is beyond thought, beyond society, and beyond time.

Why meditate?

Meditation brings a sense of fullness and completion and is the only permanent source of tranquility available to human beings. All other forms of serenity are temporary and dissolve into conflict and chaos over time. The euphoria of drugs quickly lead to misery and self-destruction. The wholesomeness of love, so beautiful and ethereal, is a relatively short lived and fleeting

experience. As J. Krishnamurti said, meditation brings order and "That order is the order of the universe. It is irrevocable and doesn't depend on anything." Meditation is the eternal essence of nature taking on conscious form within the mortal human frame.

Meditation is also an adventure of self-discovery. How can you live without knowing who or what you are? If someone asks you who you are during the day you may state your name, as if a temporary label actually means something important. Ask yourself who you are when you are in deep sleep, unconscious and without even a dream to prove that you exist at all. Ask yourself who you were ten months before you were born and who you will be just one moment after your body dies. Meditation increases awareness of the natural phenomena that is actually going on behind your own eyes. Self-knowledge has intrinsic value, even without the indescribable bliss nature generously unleashes in those who practice meditation with sincerity and patience.

Sitting Meditation

Classic sitting meditation is a vital part of all meditation traditions and has taken many forms, some more effective than others. Some traditional approaches demand that the student sit motionless for hours on end, as if becoming a human statue is the only key to enlightenment. A more scientific approach does not make the human body our enemy, but rather works with our natural physiology to allow more intense meditation with less effort and discomfort. Masochism is not an effective path to self-realization.

Begin by finding a relatively quiet place to meditate where you will not be disturbed. You may sit cross legged on a meditation pillow on the floor or in a comfortable chair. Eyes may be fully open, half open, or just slightly open, letting in just two small slits of light. Sitting meditation with the eyes fully closed, especially in a darkened room, presents fundamental physiological problems.

When you sit quietly with your eyes closed in darkness, your brain interprets this situation as a signal to start shutting itself down for sleep. Sleep inducing hormones such as melatonin are released that make you drowsy at the same time your circulation

and heart rate are reduced due to lack of movement. You feel as if swept away on a sea of quiet relaxation. This pleasant feeling may just be light sleep state hypnosis, not meditation. Meditation means that you are relaxed as if sleeping but your consciousness is fully awake.

To achieve a positive combination of deep relaxation and heightened awareness, keep your eyes open at least slightly. If your eyes are fully closed the room must remain brightly lit so that some light passes through the eyelids. The second defense against sleepiness is to break up your meditation into three fifteen minute sessions that are easy for your body to tolerate. Sit quietly for fifteen minutes, then stand for two minutes, then sit for another fifteen minutes, then stand for two minutes, then sit for a final fifteen minute session. This 49 minute technique can be done once a day, twice a day, or three times a day for intense practice. You can time yourself by making a tape recording with the sound of a bell or a gong to let you known when to stand up, sit down, and begin and end the meditation.

This technique largely eliminates the problem of cramps, soreness, and numbness in legs often experienced by students attempting to sit for longer periods of time than the body was naturally made to sit. The standing breaks increase blood circulation which helps wakefulness. Comfort is maintained and we avoid the light sleep state hypnosis problem mentioned earlier.

The transitions between sitting and standing in this method are an opportunity to practice meditation in action. Normally, unless we are physically ill, our waking lives are spent in motion and activity. Meditation must not be thought of as something that is done only in a physically rigid state far removed from the world of work and play. The goal is to become meditative continuously so that your very being becomes cosmically conscious, permanently and irrevocably. When you stand up and sit down during these meditation sessions, feel the inner flow of meditation continue. Observe that your body is moving but your existential identity remains the same.

What do you do while sitting?

The most basic approach to meditation is to relax, let go, and do nothing. Surrender to the moment and watch yourself as a silent witness. If thoughts come to mind, then observe the thoughts without adding to them by your active participation. Be a detached and passive observer and simply feel your most basic and fundamental being. This inherently immense being has been respectfully called the ground of being.

The enlightened teacher J. Krishnamurti used the term "choiceless awareness" to describe his own meditation method. This means being conscious without the thought process choosing something smaller than your vast fundamental being to focus on. Consciousness is like a glass ball floating in the depth of space. Light and sensory input flows into the field of consciousness from all directions. When you think, you focus your attention on just one area of sensory input or you create a thought from memory stored within the brain. With choiceless awareness you are not thinking or remembering, just floating and letting sensory input flow through you from all directions without manipulating that input with the thought process. You live in the moment and become totally open. This openness attracts energy from all sides of the universe which pushes you even higher.

Krishnamurti's choiceless awareness is the same "methodless method" that Zen monks call "mindfulness." Hindu yogis sometimes call it "one pointed vision." A more accurate term might be **one object vision**. This means you observe yourself, the sky, the trees, the entire universe, as one object. You no longer see the world as a multitude of parts and disconnected events. Instead, you accurately perceive the observer and the observed as exactly the same thing, with no artificial wall of separation blocking the limits of consciousness. This singular entity becomes acutely aware of itself, in all its vastness. The one cosmic being, as Krishnamurti said, is "beyond time" and is "untouched by thought." The revered sage Ramana Maharshi described it as "infinite" and "bigger than the human race."

Another useful method is to lend special awareness to the breathing process felt in the belly. Just behind and below your navel (belly button) lies the hara. The hara is a natural balancing point of your consciousness that can be thought of as the center of your subtle body. No one really knows what the hara actually is,

but we can use it to our advantage. When your consciousness is centered at the hara instead of in the head, your thinking process slows down and can even stop. When the thinking process slows down, you can relax in the expanded world of pure being. Trying to stop distracting thoughts by will power alone often leads to even more thoughts and a self-defeating inner struggle. By transferring your center of awareness to the hara, thoughts gradually disappear on their own without any inner conflict. This is why you see Buddha statues with a big belly. This is an esoteric message that the hara is a key to meditation.

Sit quietly and focus on your belly as it moves in and out as you breathe. Over time, the hara point will become more noticeable as your meditation grows stronger. We all feel the hara when startled or in intense danger. Sudden emergencies, such as near collisions on the highway, tend to activate the hara center. You get a "gut reaction" from sudden danger. You can nourish the feeling of the hara by simply paying passive attention to it. This relaxed concentration is very close to doing nothing yet it is still a subtle effort. Drinking herb tea or hot water before meditation sessions relaxes the gut and facilitates awareness of the hara. Overeating and consuming cold drinks tends to make hara awareness more difficult.

Note Here is a picture of Ramana Maharshi. If you look deeply into the photograph you can sense his hara point. Energy from all corners of the universe is flooding into his powerful hara center. Observe the look of sublime contentment on his face. Those interested in the phenomena of the hara may be amused by *My Unproven Theory About the Hara.*

WARNING Avoid the use of mantras and long repetitive chanting. Repeating the same words over and over is a method of forgetfulness which will bore the mind and leads to the light sleep state hypnosis problem mentioned earlier. I would define a mantra as the repetition of words, usually meaningless, for a period of two minutes or more. Mantras have traditionally been used for hours on end by students who become mentally calmed and dulled by their use.

The use of meaningful incantations, described in detail in the next section, is quite different than mantras use and can help bring

consciousness to greater clarity. Words can help because the human brain is a word machine. Our minds are computers that process symbols, and words are symbols. For example, repeating the words **"I am the space...I am the space...I have always been the space"** for a period of up to two minutes can be very helpful in focusing consciousness on the infinite. Do it much longer and the words lose their meaning. The exercise then degrades into a mantra, defeating the purpose of increasing wakefulness.

Mantras have proven to be medically helpful for some because they can unleash hormones that temporarily calm the mind. Mantras are healthier than taking tranquilizers, but are fundamentally different from meditation, which relies on the purifying fire of self-observation. Self-observation is a difficult task that requires courage and an endurance of character and spirit. Real meditation has the real payoff of leading to a naturally calm and expanded state of consciousness, not just an artificially silenced mind that remains fundamentally shallow.

A self-inquiry incantation

There are powerful words that can help your meditation, but they form a strategic questioning, not a mantra. Ramana Maharshi was a beloved Indian teacher who reached enlightenment through self-inquiry, by asking the most fundamental question "Who am I?" Here is a self-inquiry technique that expands Ramana Maharshi's method to make it even more powerful. Speak out loud the following incantation with total intensity before and/or during formal sitting meditation sessions. By the term "total intensity" I mean the same level of intensity you would feel if you were just told that you had only one hour left to live. Be emotional, be Italian, use your hands and body language if it helps. Plead with the universe the following question.

What is this ball of consciousness?...What is this ball of consciousness?...What is this ball of consciousness? - *You can repeat this question up to a dozen times if the spirit moves you.*

I am not this!...I am not this!...I am not this!

I am the space...I am the space...I have always been the space. - *You can repeat this statement up to a dozen times.*

I cut these bonds of attachment <u>now</u>! - *This last phrase is optional.*

Do these words sound silly? Laughter is good for meditation and the words are humorous, but the method itself is deeply serious and actually works, often with startling, electrically shocking power. You invoke this questioning incantation from the hara center, not from the head. Resonate the words deep inside you, without thinking of intellectual explanations of who you are. Just asking this question is purifying and ennobling. Self-inquiry is a very fundamental and innocent endeavor, and you need an innocent and totally open mind to see reality directly, without the distortions of memory and thought.

Over time you will find the words become a trigger mechanism which allows you to instantly drop all peripheral involvement and come home to your true cosmic being. We all have the same essential being and that being <u>is</u> cosmic. No one is left out of this universe. If you are a part of the universe <u>you are all of the universe!</u> The small 'I' is dropped and only the big 'I' remains. Then you can have a good belly laugh and that is the way I end most of my own meditation sessions. I meditate until I start laughing from the hara center. Then I know I am cooked!

The statement **"I am not this!"** means that you are not just the temporary world of illusion that Hindus call **maya**, the ever changing peripheral world of transient events. You are the **changeless being** beyond the realm of the senses. Your identity extends far beyond birth and death and beyond simple pleasure and pain. You <u>are</u> the infinite void from which all is born. That is the meaning of the statement **"I have always been the space."** Nothing is bigger than space and space contains all that exists.

When speaking the optional phrase, **"I cut these bonds of attachment <u>now</u>!,"** it helps to slap the back of the right hand against the palm of the left hand upon saying the word **"<u>now</u>!"** Reverse hands if you are left handed. This creates a loud cracking sound which adds drama and helps wake up the central

nervous system. You can use this questioning technique only at the beginning of formal sitting meditation sessions or you can repeat the incantation every five to ten minutes during the session to help keep yourself focused. Combining this self-inquiry incantation with the mirror gazing technique described below creates a **super-method** of great power and intensity.

Word exercises are not for all students of meditation. If you try them and feel nothing then concentrate on other methods first. As you slowly change your methods will change with you. A method that is unusable now may be of great help to you in the future.

Mirror Gazing

Some students find the use of a mirror virtually doubles the power of their meditation sessions. Sit in front of a mirror and gaze into the reflected image, setting your focus just above the head so that you view the wall behind you. Looking directly at the face or eyes may be too intense an experience for many students, or may lead to silly concern about personal appearance. Using this technique, one only views the physical body as a shadowy peripheral silhouette. Continue gazing for twenty minutes, allowing the eyes to deeply relax their focus.

Enjoy the mirror gazing for twenty minutes, then stand for two minutes, maintaining the heightened awareness as you change position. Then resume sitting in quiet meditation for a further twenty minutes with eyes almost totally closed, allowing in just two slits of light. This mirror gazing technique takes forty two minutes, but may be extended to one full hour if desired, with eyes open and eyes closed sections remaining equal. Please practice this method no more than once a day to avoid eye strain. Strong meditation techniques are medicine and you should not overdose on any one particular method. Combining the mirror gazing technique with the self-inquiry incantation previously detailed can increase its effectiveness tremendously, creating a **super-method**.

Eye Gazing

To do this technique you must have a partner of the opposite sex, preferably someone you love. It is similar to the mirror gazing technique described above except you that look into the eyes of your loved one. Sit together, staring softly into your partners eyes for twenty minutes. Then stand silently for two minutes. Then sit in quiet meditation with eyes almost totally closed for a further twenty minutes. This technique can readily lead to romantic intimacy so pick your partner carefully.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation

Cathartic Dancing Meditation is a cosmic powerhouse that can be used by students in good health with a normal cardiovascular system. As it is a physically strenuous exercise, one should get a complete physical examination by a competent doctor before experimenting with this technique. Explain the method to your doctor and ask if it would be physically dangerous for you to do. He won't understand your motives for wanting to do it but he can tell you if he thinks your body and heart can safely handle it. As with jogging or mountain climbing, you must practice this method <u>at your own risk</u>.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation is similar to Rajneesh Dynamic Meditation but is simpler, easier to do, and is more likely to keep you interested month after month, year after year. Neither method is really new. Sufis, Druids, and countless other esoteric and tribal cultures have used similar techniques for centuries. Most students will benefit from doing Cathartic Dancing Meditation daily for a period of between one and five years. After five years it has usually done its job and the student can move on to more subtle techniques.

Cathartic Dancing Meditation changes you from head to toe and benefits all the other meditation methods you may practice. It also helps develop a powerful hara center. I am reluctant to bring up the subject of kundalini (see definition near the bottom of the page) because of the common misrepresentations of its manifestations. I feel compelled to inform you, however, that this physically vigorous meditation method is the most powerful kundalini awakening technique I know of. Cathartic Dancing Meditation has three stages and lasts for forty minutes.

Stage #1 (**ten minutes**) Start by standing with your eyes closed and breathe deep and fast through your nose continuously. If you are only physically capable of doing deep breathing for five minutes then reduce the length of the first stage without feeling guilty. Remember that you are doing this method to help your meditation, not to physically injure yourself. Allow your body to move freely as you breathe. You can jump up and down, sway back and forth, or use any physical motion that helps you pump more oxygen into your lungs.

Stage #2 (**twenty minutes**) The second stage is a celebration of catharsis and wild and spontaneous dancing. Let go totally and act as an ancient human dancing in tribal celebration. Energetic, nonverbal background music is highly recommended. African tribal drum music works especially well. You may roll on the ground and do strange spontaneous body movements. Allow the body to move within the limits of not hurting yourself or others. For once in your life screaming is encouraged. You must act out any anger you may have in a safe way, such as beating the earth with your hands. All the suppressed emotions from your subconscious mind are to be released. If at anytime during the second stage you feel that your energy level is starting to decline you can resume deep and fast breathing to give yourself a boost.

Stage #3 (**ten minutes**) This stage is complete relaxation and quiet. Flop down on your back, get comfortable, and just let go. Be as if a dead man totally surrendered to the cosmos. Enjoy the tremendous energy you have unleashed in the first two stages and be a silent witness to it. Observe the feeling of the ocean flowing into the drop. Become the ocean.

This spontaneous dancing meditation technique is intended to grow with the student and change as the student changes. After a few years of vigorously practicing this method, the first two stages of the meditation may drop away spontaneously. You may then begin the meditation by taking a few deep breaths and immediately go deep into the ecstasy of the third stage. If practiced correctly this method is health giving and fun.

WARNING: Obviously one must practice Cathartic Dancing Meditation in a safe location and not near the edge of a cliff or on a hard surface where one might fall and break one's skull. A large

room or hall with thick carpeting is good. Outdoors in the early morning on a soft and well tended lawn with group participation is best. Do it on an empty stomach and avoid falling into dangerous objects such as windows. It is allowable to briefly open one's eyes occasionally to maintain your location. Create a safety zone around your dancing and spontaneous body movements. Be courteous to neighbors and delete the screaming if it will be heard by others.

Almost all Westerners are head oriented and emotionally repressed. For us a chaotic, spontaneous, and emotionally cleansing technique like Cathartic Dancing Meditation is vital for serious progress to be made quickly. The physical benefits of this technique obviate any need for hatha yoga or traditional kundalini yoga methods. Cathartic Dancing Meditation is so multidimensional in its effects and benefits that it deserves the designation of a **super-method**.

Soul Awareness

This method is recommended for those students who have practiced the other described techniques long enough to gain a feeling of floating bodilessness. If you cannot feel your subtle body you cannot practice this method effectively. In the beginning, it should only be used during formal sitting meditation sessions. Latter on, after you have gained some progress with this method, you can use an evolved version of the meditation while engaged in any activity that does not require thinking or your full attention. For example, you can practice it while walking in a safe location away from highway traffic.

Begin this method by sitting with eyes fully open. Softly gaze at a blank wall, or more preferably, look out a window at a distant vista. With the mind's eye (the eye of consciousness behind your body's purely physical eyes) define your field of visual consciousness as a circle. Imagine the top of your field of consciousness as the 12 o'clock position on a clock and the bottom of your field of consciousness as the 6 o'clock position. With your mind's eye, not your physical eyes, slowly sweep your attention clockwise from the top 12 o'clock position down to the 6 o'clock position, then on to the 9 o'clock position and then back up to the 12 o'clock position. Repeat this process in the

counterclockwise direction. Mentally strain to observe the very outer edges of your visual field of consciousness where the light of consciousness turns into the darkness of empty space. Go on repeating this process until you feel you have had enough.

This is a soul awareness exercise, not an eye exam, and that is why it is recommended only for students with a number of years of experience in meditation. After practicing this method for some time one can begin to transform the method into one of sudden expansion of awareness. You can gain the ability to perceive the complete 360 degrees of the outer edges of your consciousness in one jump. This feels like stepping back, literally out of your own mind, and looking back into your mind from a close and friendly distance. You become identified with the void and space around the flame of consciousness and this makes the flame grow even brighter. This truly esoteric method is difficult to fully explain and there are aspects of it that you will have to learn on your own through practice.

One discovers from this technique that our visual field of consciousness is roughly football shaped with greater width than height. This is because our brains evolved out of a need to look for food and danger more on the horizontal axis than on the vertically axis. To survive you need to be aware of what is on your right and left more than what is directly below your feet or above your head. This soul awareness method has a deprogramming effect that allows one to appreciate the play of existence as an ever changing drama. You feel as if you are in it but also out of it and beyond it. Combining the advanced form of this soul awareness method with the self-inquiry incantation described earlier creates a powerful **super-method**.

Sweeping House

This is an easy technique designed to quickly sweep the clutter of thoughts from your mind. It can be used before starting formal sitting meditation sessions or anytime during the day you feel you have lost your existential focus. Begin by placing both hands behind your head with fingers interlocked. Rest your hands at the point where the neck and the head meet. Then sweep your hands over the top of your head. This can be done either slowly or quickly as you prefer. Imagine that your hands are gathering up

all your thoughts as they move. When your hands reach just below your forehead, use a flicking motion as you simultaneously unlock your fingers and throw your hands away from your face. Feel as if all your thoughts are being swept out of your eyes and discarded. Do this between ten and fifteen times as needed, and then relax and enjoy the inner silence. This method takes less than one minute to do and can be used at bedtime to help free the mind from the problems of the day.

Sweeping House with a Kicker

A variation of the sweeping house technique is to add a breathing stage after the sweeping stage is complete. Place your right palm (left if you are lefthanded) on your forehead and place your left palm on the back of the right hand. Now take 4 to 7 deep breaths through the nose and feel as if you are drawing the air way down to your belly. Fully exhale in a normal and relaxed fashion after each breath. This breathing technique is not yoga bastrika. It is ordinary deep breathing done with intensity and fullness. After exhaling the last breath, sit motionless a few moments with your hands still on your forehead. Cooperate with any upward flow of energy you may feel. This energetic method can be done every 10 minutes during an hour long sitting meditation session to create a mild and safe kundalini technique.

You can be creative

After you have become comfortable with the meditation techniques individually you can learn to incorporate them simultaneously to multiply their effectiveness. For example, combining mirror gazing, hara awareness, the soul awareness technique, and the use of the self-inquiry incantation can be an extremely powerful **super-method**. There are no rigid one size fits all meditation techniques. Follow your intuition and let the methods evolve to fit your own individuality. Don't take the time suggestions for methods as rigid limits. If you desire to extend your meditation sessions then go with the flow.

The wanting mechanism

What is one of the most important factors in keeping us diverted from meditation in the here and now? Look inside your

mind and find the wanting mechanism. The wanting mechanism continuously constructs images of new experiences the mind desires, derived from memories of the past. The mind becomes enamored with these new fantasy images and is diverted from what actually is, here and now. The eternal cosmic consciousness exists here and now, never in the future, and never in the past. Future and past are illusory and do not exist in any real physical form outside of projections of the mind. What exists now is everything, and you already have it. You only need to become conscious of your own wealth.

Wanting is part of life, creativity, family building, wealth creation, and the survival instinct. In the sense of preserving the human race on planet earth, wanting is a very good thing. In the sense of an individual becoming an awakened Buddha, wanting is a hindrance. Wanting creates duality, the wanter and that which is desired. The essay, *Call For a New Buddhism*, touches on this issue. Siddhartha Gautama taught that desire is a root cause of suffering. But who was he speaking to and who can actually take the last steps to enlightenment by dropping the wanting mechanism totally?

Not wanting means not wanting anything, not just dropping the desire for sex, money, and power, but also dropping the desire for truth, justice, family, and nation. It is not what you want that matters, it is the wanting mechanism itself that is the barrier. Deep meditation is a giant leap beyond logic and the norms of society. It is dissolving into infinity and oblivion and not coming back. Very few humans have been able to manage that radical transformation totally and that is why enlightenment will always be an extremely rare phenomena.

If everyone in the world suddenly became enlightened, in my opinion, the human race would come to an end. There would be a lack of sufficient desire to keep people motivated enough to have families, raise children, grow crops, and protect society from all the natural threats, from disease to ecological disaster. That said, I certainly believe that enlightenment is a desirable goal for those who really want it. But you can see the impossibility of the situation. When you "want" enlightenment your wanting mechanism is still active and enlightenment will not happen to

you. So we can breathe easy that everyone in the world will not become enlightened, all at the same time, anytime soon.

The need for meditation many people feel is beyond normal logic and beyond the scope of words to fully express. I can tell you that a key to experiencing superconsciousness, from the moment you wake up in the morning until the moment you fall asleep at night, is to step back from the wanting mechanism. This stepping back is only possible for those who have reached at least the fourth stage (see *The Seven Bodies*). Otherwise you will not have the energy and clarity to see the wanting mechanism and realize what is involved in turning it off. You will suppress desires and live a false life because you have not yet found the inner key, which is an intense form of self-observation, not suppression. Therefore, in a way, I am stating publicly that which should remain unspoken. If you try to artificially stop wanting when you are in the first body you will never reach the second body. Even in the third body this method of not wanting will only slow down your progress, because it will be a false effort.

I do not know how long it takes for this process of stepping back from the wanting mechanism to become 100% effective. As an ordinary student, I am only now, after decades of effort, beginning to make any real progress with it. I felt obligated to mention this esoteric topic because this Web page was constructed to convey all of the best methods and the most usable of the secret teachings. Ending the wanting mechanism had to be mentioned and those who are ready for that step will find that it brings time to a halt, annihilates the future and the past, and expands consciousness to the far reaches of the universe. It is a silent, inner explosion.

Ask yourself these questions.

1) If you want something, how can you stop thinking about it?

2) If you don't want anything, what is there to think about?

3) If you don't want anything, is there anything to be angry about?

4) If you don't want anything, is there anything to make you unhappy?

5) Rocks and other inanimate objects do not want and do not suffer, but they are unconscious and dead. How does a living human being enter a no-wanting state while fully conscious and filled to the brim with life energy? That is the incredible contradiction and difficulty in becoming enlightened.

At some point on your own noble path you will see very clearly that wanting is a barrier. That realization may hit you suddenly like a freight train (my blood is still on the tracks) or gradually creep into your consciousness over time. Only when you see it clearly on your own should you try to step back from the wanting mechanism. Until that right time occurs you will be needed to save this beautiful planet earth, to raise families, and to be good citizens. Take meditation one step at a time. Do not try to imitate the final steps into the abyss while you are still at the foot of the mountain.

How long should I meditate?

The time a person needs to spend in formal meditation sessions to gain maximum benefit depends on ever-changing individual circumstances. If you are meditating with a group you will gain from the group energy and go further with less effort. If you are fortunate enough to be living close to an enlightened teacher you may be able to absorb some of his high energy without any effort at all. If you are meditating alone, without support from others, then you will have to do all the heavy lifting yourself.

My general recommendation is that 1 hour a day spent in formal meditation sessions is a minimal effort. Meditation only works for those who are hungry for it and if you cannot spare that small amount of time for meditation then you will probably not gain substantial results. Most people will be helped significantly by meditating 1 hour a day, but progress may be so slow that you barely feel it. If you wish to go faster, so that you can feel the wind in your hair with clearly recognizable progress, then I suggest 1.5 to 2.5 hours a day.

Two 45 minute sessions, one in the morning and one in the evening, works well for most people. Adding a third 45 minute session in the afternoon is stronger medicine if you can manage it. Spending more time than that in formal meditation sessions becomes difficult for most people as it takes you away from family, friends, job, and social responsibilities. If you are single, of independent means, and naturally reclusive, then you may spend as much time in formal meditation sessions as you wish.

A specific recommendation for young, physically fit beginners would be to practice Cathartic Dancing Meditation in the morning and the mirror gazing-self-inquiry incantation **super-method** at night. That powerhouse combination will produce owl eyed Zen wakefulness very rapidly and the combination represents a complete meditation system.

It is of paramount important to practice mindfulness throughout the day. To be of any real value meditation must become a full-time way of living rather than a strictly segregated activity. Choose methods that make you feel more positive. Meditation should be a form of cosmic hedonism, not a penance one must perform as an obligation.

How long does it take to become enlightened?

I have no idea how to answer that question as I am just a fellow student myself. I do not believe the old scriptures nor do I trust the word of pundits and self-proclaimed “masters.” It may take 10 lifetimes or 1,000,000 lifetimes.

Meditation is a pleasure in itself and the healthiest approach is to enjoy the journey without thoughts of gaining a pot of gold at the end of some distant rainbow. Ask yourself who or what will reach that imagined goal? If our petty little minds reach enlightenment, then will we be enlightened at all? Thinking about goals takes us further away from choiceless awareness, relaxation, and ecstasy, and is thus counterproductive. It is best to fully enjoy the journey of meditation without seeking any title, credentials, or an ultimate brass ring that we can selfishly own and brag about to others.

Things to do, things to avoid, and things to consider

- Work in groups when possible as group energy can multiply the energy of an individual many times over.
- Remember that meditation is an escape to reality, not an escape from reality. Avoid any guru or group that asks you to deny truth.
- Don't limit yourself to just one teacher. The single guru approach can lead to cult thinking with its small mindedness and us vs. them syndrome.
- Sitting with legs crossed yoga style during formal sitting meditation sessions helps retain energy in the second body (see *The Seven Bodies*), but sitting normally in a chair is perfectly acceptable if that is all you can manage. Those who are physically infirm can have great success meditating in a recliner chair with knees bent and soles of the feet pressed together. Locking hands together also helps hold in energy. Hatha yoga can make you more energetic and fit for long meditation sessions, but do not take it too seriously or become obsessed with extreme gymnastics.
- Having a separate room used exclusively for meditation in very helpful if you can afford it. You can build up a vibration in a room so that the moment you enter your mind becomes silent and ready to go deeper.
- Avoid fads (newage therapists kill girl) and complicated philosophies that give your mind more to think about. Meditation is a step beyond the thought process. No philosophy can adequately describe man's place in the universe. Concentrate on meditation in this moment and not on ancient scriptures. Many old scriptures were written by madmen and fools and have gained respect from society simply because they are so old and dusty.
- Try to meditate every day, not just when you feel inspired and meditation comes easily. When you feel rocks blocking your path, that is precisely the time meditation is needed to wear those rocks into dust.
- Take good care of your health. Get a proper diet without becoming a food fanatic. A vegetarian diet supplemented with dairy products is generally best. Eggs are not harmful to meditation. If you wish to eat meat, then fish is a better choice than fowl or beef. If you have a medical problem like hypoglycemia you may have to eat meat just to survive. A vegetarian or semi-vegetarian diet is usually best for students of meditation, but food should not be made the fundamental basis of your practice. Remember that Adolf Hitler was a perfect vegetarian yet his diet did not save his soul or even make him nonviolent.
- Avoid fasting as it is a waste of time, will weaken you physically, and can even cause neurological damage. Faddish books written about the imagined benefits of fasting are not based on real medical science.
- Avoid drugs and alcohol. Carlos Castaneda was a talented fiction writer, but he misled many people. Drugs are not an effective path to enlightenment, but they are a quick path to misery and insanity.

- Have sex when you wish and do not force celibacy upon yourself in the hopes it will lead to enlightenment. To meditate one must be in a very natural and relaxed state of mind without repression or tension. Celibacy can only be of value if it occurs spontaneously without effort or thought. The majority of famous Eastern gurus who have proclaimed celibacy publicly have practiced intercourse privately. Why make sex a big secret and why have two faces? Many fully enlightened humans have had sexual relations even after enlightenment. There is no relationship between abstinence and spirituality.
- Do practice choiceless awareness (one object vision, mindfulness etc.) throughout the day. Meditation must become as continuous and spontaneous as breathing.
- Don't make meditation a competition and drop any hidden agenda you may have to use it to control others. Legitimate motives for meditation are the desire for tranquility and ecstasy, freedom from suffering, and the pure adventure of self-exploration.
- Don't turn your meditation into a business. People who make a profit from intercourse have turned something beautiful into something ugly. Those who make money from meditation have transformed a noble path into a sordid back alley. Whether you are a sexual prostitute or a spiritual prostitute, the fundamental quality of your mind is the same.
- Be completely honest and have just one face, not two.
- Don't take the inspiring but totally unrealistic teachings of J. Krishnamurti and U.G. Krishnamurti seriously. Both great men, but generally poor teachers, were talking about themselves when they said that methods are not needed. They lost the need for technique after enlightenment, but both men practiced many methods before they attained. If you do not do methods you will never develop any inner power. Meditation methods put direct pressure on the false self, the ego. If you continue patient practice at some point that false self will implode under the pressure, without warning and without apparent and obvious method. 99.99% of people who drop methods stop far too soon, thus bringing their progress to an early end.
- For every action there is a reaction, not just in theoretical physics but in ordinary human life as well. When you create positive actions you will eventually reap positive reactions for yourself and for others. In this way what we call ethics and morality are woven into the very fabric of the universe right down to the subatomic level.

Enlightenment

The fastest meditation method is to live in the company of an enlightened human being. Enlightened teachers can expand your

consciousness without the slightest effort on your part. All you need to do is to be open to the spontaneous transfer of energy. Fully enlightened human are very rare. There may have been as few as seven fully enlightened teachers in the 20th century. I do not know of any fully enlightened teachers still living today, but that does not mean they do not exist. More enlightened souls will be coming in the future and it is your challenge to find them while avoiding the many fakes.

When it comes to teachers, even fully enlightened teachers, take the best and leave the rest. No human being has ever been perfect and without major flaws and limitations. Only myths can give the illusion of perfection and that is why most of society continues to worship invented myths rather than accepting reality as it is, warts and all. Enlightened humans are vastly expanded human beings, not perfect human beings.

It is my educated opinion that the traditional guru-disciple relationship is now passé and inappropriate for Western students of meditation. The East has always had an imperial and authoritarian model for the teacher-student relationship. The West must develop its own Jeffersonian model based on science and fact, not on myth and tradition. Be a devoted disciple, but make your ultimate guru **the all and the everything**, the ultimate truth of the total cosmic existence. Use teachers as temporary tools on your path to self-realization, but do not allow yourself to become the captive servant of one fallible human mind.

***** Definition: kundalini (k¢n´de-lê´nê) noun of Hindu origin. Physical and sexual energy that lies dormant at the base of the spine is activated through esoteric kundalini practice. This energy is directed through the kundalini channel in the etheric body upward to the top of the head.

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Other Web pages at this site

Call For a New Buddhism

The TES Hypothesis

The Seven Bodies

Osho, Bhagwan Rajneesh, and the Lost Truth

Useful outside links

U.G. Krishnamurti No relation to J. Krishnamurti, this talkative Indian man may be on some level of enlightenment. I highly recommend viewing the 9th streaming video archive designated as "Friends in Sidney, 1990 1 2 3." That file also works with a 33.6 modem.

http://www.ugkrishnamurti.org/ug/ug_video/index.html

Jiddu Krishnamurti A dry, publicly humorless enlightened man who was uniquely lovable. His powerful vibrations can still be felt at Arya Vihara, Krishnamurti's former home in Ojai, California.

http://www.kfa.org/index.html Krishnamurti Foundation of America

I highly recommend the CD, *Meditation, Silence, and the Quiet Mind*

http://www.silcom.com/~jmsloss/ *Lives in the Shadow with J. Krishnamurti*

17th Karmapa Ugyen Trinley Dorje, a true living Bodhisattva.

http://www.personal.u-net.com/~samye/17gyalwa.htm **- background** http://www.nalandabodhi.org/ **- news**

Ramana Maharshi Amazingly, every major religious group in India agreed that Ramana Maharshi was enlightened.

http://www.ramana-maharshi.org/

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff The only enlightened Westerner I know of.

http://www.gurdjieff.org/

Suggested reading

Meetings With Remarkable Men, by G.I. Gurdjieff, Viking Penguin Books. No tedious philosophy here, just the pure adventure of the search for truth.

Note Opinions expressed on this page must be viewed as the ideas of an ordinary student of meditation. While I truly believe everything I say, you should not believe anything unless you see it, feel it, and know it for yourself. I make no claims of infallibility. In fact I absolutely claim fallibility.

Truth is a sword that cuts in all directions.

It is a mind that is unprejudiced by religion, philosophy, and cultural conditioning. It is going naked in the stars.
